1849

First Baptist Church

San Francisco

"Old First Church"

1974

FIRST Baptist Church of San Francisco is located in the heart of one of the most strategic and beautiful cities in the world. It is said that San Francisco is everybody's favorite city. Year after year the city is flooded with tourists and convention-goers from all over the world. Ships come daily into our wonderful port from most all the nations of the world. The people of San Francisco are more cosmopolitan than most any place you can imagine. This is also characteristic of our church.

AS every church ought to be, our membership consists of people from all continents of the world, all races and nationalities.

LOCATION in such a strategic position gives all the more urgency to our witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this we try to declare the gospel in all its purity. We try to lead our people to meaningful Christian experience which involves every area of life. The vast majority of active members are faithful tithers and are vitally concerned with the ongoing of the kingdom of God. Many of our people participate regularly in a great variety of ministries.

FIRST Baptist Church has a great and glorious history, but the potential for the future is even more exciting.

JOHN B. STREATER,
Pastor

Greetings

IN THIS 125th Anniversary of First Baptist Church of California, it gives me pleasure to be part of such a rich historical heritage. We can praise and thank God for what he has done through this body of believers.

THE city has changed - peoples needs have changed. The church has gone through many transitions in its history in order to meet the needs of people. The gospel message is always the same -- but there are many ways by which we communicate the gospel and translate it into redemptive action.

WE HAVE a great challange to become a church which is so oriented to not only meet needs but to become facilitators of change in the heart of San Francisco, a city so desperately in need of the "Good News".

JOHN H. McRAE
Assistant Pastor

In the beginning... God

AT the close of the year 1848 the Board of the Home Mission Society, feeling the urgent need of the Protestant ministry in San Francisco, appointed Rev. Osgood C. Wheeler, being strongly convicted that here was God's man.

AFTER all night in prayer both Rev. and Mrs. Wheeler knew that truly this was their call from God. Weeks of rapid preparation followed. On Friday, December 1, 1848 the Wheelers sailed out of New York Harbor just three days before news of the discovery of gold reached Washington. Ninety days later, on February 28, 1849, after a most hazardous trip; cholera among the passengers, several nights in a canoe, twenty-five miles on horseback, many days of waiting for their steamer to arrive, the first Baptist minister and group passed through the Golden Gate into San Francisco, considered the "darkest spot on earth.

Dr. Spencer H. Cone
President American Baptist
Home Mission Society, 1849

IMMEDIATELY began the difficult venture of establishing a morning worship, a Sunday School, prayer meeting and finially, on July 6, at the home of Charles Ross, with six people presenting letters for membership, the First Baptist Church of San Francisco was organized. On August 5, on a $10,000 lot on Washington Street near Stockton a simple wooden structure costing $6,000 was dedicated; thus becoming the first Protestant church building in the Golden State! This building was also used for the first public school in California.

FROM this meager beginning the attendance grew rapidly, as did the house of worship and the sanctuary was enlarged.

THEN came the Sunday morning of October 21, 1849 when the first candidate for baptism, Col. Thomas Kellam of the United States Army was presented to the little church. For this ceremony crowds gathered at the humble sanctuary. The other churches in the city had suspended their services to join the procession. First came the pastor, members, the candidate, the mayor, city officials, Commander Jones of the Pacific Squadron, his Naval staff, a number of Marines in full uniform, medical chiefs of both Army and Navy and the Prime Minister of Hawaii. The procession marched down Stockton Street to Union Street to Powell and then to the beach of San Francisco Bay to

perform the first baptism in these waters.

THE church continued to grow and prosper. Pastor Wheeler, after establishing other churches in California, resigned in 1851. The church building had been destroyed by fire along with most of the downtown area and a period of discouragement followed. A new location was purchased on Eddy street and worship building erected.

First Building, 1849

THE following history of the church was one of many pastors -- some leaving due to climatic conditions, others for physical reasons, some due to the heavy indebteness of the church. However, through all the difficulties, even when left pastorless, the Lord seemed to bless the faithful and rewarded them by sending them Dr. George Burlingame to become their pastor.

SUDDENLY came the disastrous earthquake and fire in April 1906 sweeping over the city and obliterating many churches, including our own. Dr. Burlingame and his loyal group continued in prayer seeking the Lord's guidance for a new site for the church. The corner lot at Market, Octavia and Waller was purchased. In 1909 ground was broken, the cornerstone laid, and on September 14, 1910 our present church was completed and dedicated much to the joy of all who shared sacrificially in this great endeavor.

DOCTOR Burlingame left the church in a great spiritual victory and resigned a great pastorate in nineteen hundred seventeen.

AFTER a number of years again with no pastor, Dr. James S. West was called and once again the church revived under his leadership. However, financial indebtedness and dissatisfaction with church affairs among some members soon brought about the resignation of Dr. West. Now when the church seemed at its lowest ebb; Rev. David Dawson, Director of Evangelism of the Northern California Baptist Convention came to lay the foundation for a deep spiritual growth, giving of himself sacrifically. Upon Rev. Dawson's resignation the Pulpit Committee unanimously called Rev. Lewis J. Julianel. What a blessing! Truly a man of God!

NO TIME was wasted for under his strong, dynamic leadership and evangelistic preaching from God's word, things began to happen.

HIS coming marked the start of an era of expansion and growth! He immediately began a complete renovation of the interior of the church. The organ was moved down to its present location and a choir loft was built.

THE baptistry was changed to the corner in a beautiful setting. The prayer meeting room was expanded to include more Sunday School rooms and stained glass windows were installed and dedicated.

DOCTOR Julianel arranged for the purchase of additional properties and the Educational Building was erected. The edifice on Haight Street became the San Francisco Bible College.

THEN came "Julianel Hall" which today houses the Pre-School Day Care Center. The old Fire House on Waller Street was transformed into a beautiful chapel used for special services, such as weddings, graduations and Junior Church.

EVERY available space was being used and a pre-fabricated building was placed on the parking lot for extra useful activities.

DOCTOR Julianel led the church in a great evangelistic and spiritual growth. Then, in 1959 he retired and was elected our beloved Pastor Emeritus after twenty- three years of service.

THE Pulpit Committee called Dr. Curtis Nims who served for three years and then resigned to answer God's call to enter the evangelistic ministry.

IN 1954 Rev. John B. Streater of Florida accepted the call and has continued to serve as our pastor.

Dr. O. C. Wheeler

Dr. George E. Burlingame

LEWIS J. JULIANEL, D. D.

Sunday School

AS First Baptist Church celebrates its 125th Anniversary, the Sunday School can be justly proud of the 125 years it has been a part of this great church. On May 27, 1849 the first Protestant Sunday School of California was inaugurated in the First Baptist Church building. The first Daily Vacation Bible School was initiated in 1915 as a regular yearly outreach of the Sunday School. The passing years have continued to see a faithful Sunday School witness at First Baptist Church.

UNDER the able leadership of our present Bible School Superintendant, Mr. John Randle, a new dimension has been added in the monthly Bible School Workers' Conference. This series of monthly Workshops brings all Bible School workers together to acquaint them with new methods and materials for our Religious Education outreach. Our Bible School sponsored pot-luck luncheon early this year was a huge success as it has always been in the past. Last December the Bible School combined with the Messengers and The New Life Singers to present an inspiring Christmas play, "Maranatha".

THE Bible School continues to be blessed with loyal workers from the Cradle Roll through the Adult De-- partments. This is a part of the historic tradition of First Baptist Church which has emphasized the importance of Bible Training for all - the youngest to the very oldest.

THE continuing emphasis of the Bible School is a three-fold one: Bible teaching, fellowship and outreach. Within its organizational structure these factors must continue as the Bible School makes a viable impact on the life of the Church and the community.

Douglas Butler

Bethany Class

AT THE time of the inception of the Bethany Class, it was the youngest of six classes in the Adult Department, and took as its motto - II Tim. 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

THE DATE was Sept. 1941 at the home of Mrs. Elda Brehm who became the first Class President. Only eight persons were present, but within a short time the class enrollment grew to thirty-six members plus associate members.

FROM time to time the class had many projects. These included; distributing Bibles to the intermediate department. and supplying the booklet of daily devotions, "The Secret Place" wherever needed.

ONE OF the outstandingly helpful ideas of this class was known as the "Prayer Chain" No matter

what the hour or the need, when a call came from someone in need of prayer all members were quickly contacted and prayers were immediately put into action. Results, as many will testify, were great.

IN 1949, due to reorganization throught our beloved church, the class was reorganized into what is now the Rainbow Class, continuing to carry on the work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Caltha Rhoads

Home Department

ORIGINATING with a wide awake group of forty-five senior citizen charter members, the Home Department has provided Christian strength, vision and outreach beyond the confines of former achievements in the Master's service.

EACH member receives in his home the S.S. Quarterly and the Secret Place. In addition all birthdays are remembered as well as other special occasions and appropriate greetings are sent.

MANY of this Department who have relocated in other parts of the country are regularly contacted. While many miles may seperate us from view, we are only a heart beat away in love and prayer.

MAY THE LORD continue to bless the Home Department at "Old First Church" in the days ahead.

Maud Seidell

Training Union

IN EARLY spring of 1961 a need in our First Baptist Church was recognized as evidenced by the fact that throughout the congregation there were many single adults, over the age of what was called the Young Adult Department, possibly adults of 35 years and older. Needed was a group where they could fellowship with other Christian single adults with similar problems.

THEREFORE several interested people met to discuss the possibility of forming such a group. Dr. Curtis Nims, pastor at the time, was advisor of the group to begin with. After discussion it was decided to start the group, using various media to advertise the fact that such a group was starting. The date was set in June, 1961 for the first meeting of the group.

SOWERS, derived from Searcher of the Word, was accepted by the charter members. The plan was to meet at 6:30 every Sunday night for a Christian program. The body of the single adult group would then attend Church together. Following the evening service, it became a part of the activities of the group to go out for a bite to eat or to someone's home for a singspiration and refreshments.

FROM the beginning the Sowers Fellowship drew many and was what would be considered a success. Many found friends and companionship in this group. The group kept in mind the main purpose of the fellowship... to promote the Gospel and win others, as well as bring in those who were lonely and unable to find the right place for fellowship.

Ellen (Speacht) Keller

TRAINING UNION is that part of our church life seeking to train Christians to better serve our Lord.

SEVERAL groups meet each Sunday evening for training, then through the week are involved in Bible Studies, mission services and social fellowship.

THE VICTORY group has, for the past 33 years, been outstandingly faithful in all areas of church life and continues to serve the Lord in a variety of ways.

THEY meet once a month for Bible study under the leadership of Dr. Richard Cramer and also conduct a service at the Harbor Lights Mission every fifth Friday.

Choir

UP THROUGH the years the Firs Baptist Chior has praised the Lor with Hymns, Anthems, Oratorios an Cantatas. The choir has been blessed wit many fine directors. The two who served the longest were William Miller and Bruce Millar.

THE highest point ever reached was the combined choirs of First Baptist and Glad Tidings Temple live on television singing the great Oratorio, The Messiah by Handel. Directed by Robert Young and promoted by Bruce Millar, it was performed at the First Baptist Church in 1952. One hundred and eleven voices really made a "joyful noise unto the Lord" with the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus.

LUCILLE MILLAR

Lucille Millar, Organist

Outreach

THE past twenty-five years have brought many changes to San Francisco and to the area around First Baptist Church We have been very active in seeking to give some spiritual direction to our community. Our pastors and members have given of their time and service to rescue missions, Western Addition District Council, Police Community Relations Committee, San Quentin Prison (School of Religion), San Francisco City and County Jail (preaching and counseling) San Francisco School Improvement Program, San Francisco General Hospital Chaplaincy Program, Laguna Honda Home, convalescent homes, hospitals, and retirement hotels, Boy Scouts of America, athletic teams for baseball and basketball, youth camps, and the Neighborhood Program for the youth of the immediate area.

AT present we are conducting a program for senior adults of our church and community, Pre-School five days each week and the San Francisco School District uses the education building five days each week for tutoring and guidance of students with problems.

OUR outreach goes beyond our community through our mission program. Presently we are supporting missionaries in Argentina, Hong Kong, Japan and Okinawa.

PRAY with us that the "Light of Christ" may continue to shine forth from this historic church and may we continue to carry out the great commission of our Lord as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Howard Day

Senior Adult

THE SENIOR adult program was instituted in 1967 by Pastor John Streater and Assistant Pastor Dr. Howard C. Day, with Dr. Day as leader. There were thirty-five present at the first meeting. Many of these charter members are present at current meetings and many new members have been added.

THE Senior Adults meet on Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. of each week. Scenic pictures of various parts of the United States and foreign countries are shown after a devotional period. A picnic is held each summer and past trips have included the Geysers and the Samuel F. Taylor park in Marin County. Other tours have been to such places as the telephone building, the Golden Gate College, the Marin County Court House, the Fremont General Motors Plant and others. There have also been hand craft classes.

AT 12:00 noon each Tuesday, members go to the Fireside Room for a sack lunch. Coffee and dessert is served by the group. Afterwards several hymns are sung and the group is dismissed with prayer.

Jail Program

WE PRAISE the Lord for all the needy souls that have been unshackled through the city jail ministry. Sunday after Sunday and year after year through the proclamation of the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only Eternity will show the results.

MULTITUDES of children on the streets of San Francisco who never attend any church have been brought to Good News Clubs and have heard the loving, saving and keeping power of our Lord Jesus Christ and have received the Lord. We need to reach out by faith and train some of them to become diciples for our Lord and for tomorrow's America.

Outreach

THE NEW LIFE SINGERS
under the leadership of Miss Doris Johnson has been a tremendous influence to our church the past several years. It has brought great joy to young and old alike.

PRE-SCHOOL DAY CARE CENTER
cares for the children of parents desiring a Christian Educational Program.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP RETREAT
is an annual overnite gathering called by the pastor to make plans for the coming year and for a spiritual re-dedication uniting the entire church body.

NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRY
is a program directed to meet the needs of the community.

HOTEL SENIOR ADULT PROGRAM
is a regular worship service conducted by our various church groups.

THE INTERNATIONALS
a continuing, loving ministry in our city to those from around the world with a special emphasis on a student retreat each Thanksgiving weekend.

TELEPHONE MINISTRY
A daily calling service designed to care for immediate needs or spiritual guidance to all especially those living alone.

NEW EYES FOR THE NEEDY
sends glasses and cases to missionaries. An average of over three hundred persons are benefitted by this program each year.

San Francisco Baptist College

A BRIGHT comet which appeared in the constellation of the First Baptist Church from 1947 to 1957 was the San Francisco Baptist College. A large share of the planning, concern and financial backing came from the First Baptist Church under the leadership of Dr. Lewis J. Julianel, who was named first President. The college operation was conducted in the now-departed building at 121 Haight Street.

DOCTOR Fredrick Berger was first Dean, and contributed much to the developement of the academic program. Dr. Richard W. Cramer succeeded Dr. Berger and led the college in the balance of its life. An impressive list of highly dedicated persons performed the work of the faculty and staff.

THE quality of the work of this brief history is demonstrated in the outstanding achievement of the small number of graduates. Of approximately seventy-five persons who earned the A.B. degree, representatives are now engaged in ministry in graduate schools, mission fields, pastorates, public school teaching, the business field, law and many other areas.

IN SPITE of the devoted efforts of administration, faculty and staff, interested friends and churches, it became necessary to close the operation of the college at the time of commencement in 1957. Financial support simply was not available. At the present time requests still come to First Baptist Church for information and for transcripts of work done in previous years.

Fellowship Bible Institute

FELLOWSHIP Bible Institute was founded in 1953 by Dr. Dessie Webster after ten years of intensive pioneering in the bay area.

WITH financial support and encouragement from the First Baptist Church, San Francisco Bible College Dean Richard Cramer, and other local churches, the Institute began its work with eighteen interested people.

DOWN through these many years Dr. Dessie and Chaplain Daniel Webster continue joyously serving the Lord in this ministry at their present location on Plymouth Avenue in San Francisco.

American Baptist Women

MORE than fifty years ago, right after World War I, four women in a small church in Ohio said, "Let's take all the female energy that went into Red Cross work during the war and use it for the cause of Christ and Christian missions.

THEY went to work collecting worn sheets to be torn, rolled into bandages or made into surgeons gowns. They collected Bible story pictures, construction paper, glue, scissors, crayons and children's clothing to be scent to American Baptist Mission hospitals at home and around the world. The news of the vision and the work of these women was published in the American Baptist Mission magazine.

THE women of First Baptist Church of San Francisco were among the first to catch the vision and have, through the years, worked for our missionaries at home and overseas. Thousands of bandages and postcard sized quilt blocks plus countless other articles have been shipped around the world.

OUR women have supported our missionaries with their prayers, money and personal gifts. We have participated in the Love Gift program of the American Baptist Women which is an over and above gift to be used in emergencies that arise and are not provided for in our national budget.

WE HAVE provided many things for our church building; kitchen supplies, refrigerator, carpeting for women's lounge and helping purchase the carpet in the Fireside Room.

Men's Fellowship

THE First Baptist Men's Fellowship of San Francisco carries out the threefold purpose of the American Baptist Men:

1. To lead men into a vital relationship to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.
2. To enlist men in a live of effective Christian service in the church and community.
3. To advance and support the wider work and program of American Baptist Churches with its expanding agencies.

MEN of our church have found this fellowship to be a valuable part of church experience as they serve on boards, committees, councils, etc. a as well as special projects about the church in its ministry.

GOOD NEWS

OLD FIRST CHURCH has been the starting place for many who have devoted their lives to the full-time service of their Lord. The following list names some of those to enter ministries in recent years.

Tom Sommerville
Family Radio, Inc.
Dean Anderson
Music Director, Evangelical Free Church
Orange, California
Clyde Howe
Chaplain, Mt. View Hospital, El Camino
Rev. Don Raisner
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Dinuba, Cal.
Rev. William H. Koenig
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Ft. Bragg
Rev. Roy Milam
Founder, Westlake Church, Daly City
Pastor, Temple Baptist, Richmond
Rev. Harry Larson
Founder, Roger Williams Christian School
Pastor, South San Francisco First Church
Rev. Harry Twining
Pastor, Saratoga Baptist Church
Dan Carr
Missionary, Saratoga Baptist Church
David Spruance
Missionary, Argentina
Joe Meeko
Missionary, Yokohama, Japan

REV. HARRY H. LARSON

LIMITATIONS of time, space and availability have necessitated the exclusion of many significant events, groups and people from this little book. John wrote in John 21:25 that "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

THUS it is with the history of the "Old First Church" and its members. We have tried here only to represent an outline of the history of the church. Those who are not included in this little book may rest assured that they have been included in the much more important Lamb's Book of Life.

PASTOR Streater, a native of Lakeland, Florida, is a graduate of Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. He spent eight years in the United States Navy before and during World War II as an enlisted man and commissioned officer. From February, 1947, until December, 1951, he was a missionary to China. The Streaters were in China before, and for two years after the Communist takeover.

Pastor Streater's messages are Bibical and Christ centered with a strong evangelistic thrust. The pastor and his wife, Carol, came to First Baptist Church, San Francisco, January 1, 1965.

DOCTOR Howard C. Day was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and graduated from the University of Tennessee. He was employed as a chemist in Nashville when he answered the call to the ministry. His theological education was received at Southern, Golden Gate and Southwestern Baptist Seminaries. He has served as pastor at the Bethany Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia, as U.S. Army Chaplain, and as Coordinator of Institutional Ministries in the Bay Area. After serving Old First for 23 years, Dr. Day retired on December 31, 1973. He now serves at San Francisco General Hospital as chaplain.

'Neath the shadow

In the heart of San Francisco,
'Neath a bright, revolving cross,
Countless re-born souls have sung God's praises,
Saved from everlasting, shameful loss.

Those from many walks of life have labored,
A hundred twenty-five great years;
God, through men of high renown, has spoken,
Bringing souls to penitance and tears.

Some have strayed from God's green pastures;
On life's stormy billows toss;
May they soon seek peace and shelter,
In the shadow of the Cross.

May our lamps be trimmed and burning,
As the years pass in review;
Father, keep us ever watchful;
Courage, faith and strength renew.

In the shadow of the cross of Jesus,
May God's love with us abide;
Christ, crucified, be lifted high;
God's great name be ever glorified.

Eunice Osborne

"This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" PSALM 118:23

DOWN through these 125 years, God has uniquely blessed and honored the program of this Old First Church" Today we must continue to serve our Lord in presenting the gospel to all who enter our doors in praparation for the imminent return of our precious Savior, Jesus Christ. To that end may we all work strenuously, shoulder to shoulder, with the spirit of Christian Love, Faith and Determination to do the will of our Lord as we press forward to greater accomplishments in the unpredictable future.

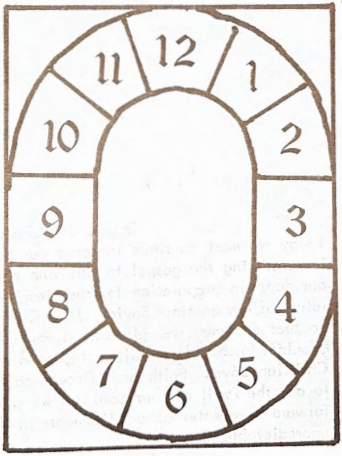
FRONT COVER

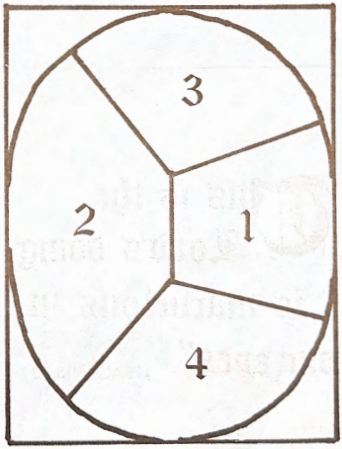
SINCE REV. WHEELER, Old First has had many pastors. Some have been with us only a short while and others led the congregation for years. Each pastor left his own distinctive mark on the history and develoepement of the church.

Those pictured on the front cover of this book are; 1. Rev. Hulbert, 2. Rev. Thomas, 3. Rev. Gray, 4. Rev. Cheney, 5. Rev. Boynton, 6. Rev. Phelps, 7. Rev. Medbury, 8. Rev. Dawson, 9. Rev. Cone, 10. Rev. Kinkaid, 11. Rev. Briely and 12. Rev. West.

BACK COVER

SCENES on the back cover show some of the high and low points in the history of Old First. Scene one is the church building as it appeared in 1849. Second is the Eddy Street edifice, destroyed by fire in 1899. Third is the joyous groundbreaking for the present church in 1909. Fourth is a photo taken during the 1918 Flu epidemic when services were held on the sidewalk.





1849

1974